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SUBJECT: SWEDEN ON JUNE 15-16 GAERC

Classified By: Classified by POL Counselor Marc Koehler for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In preparation for the June 15-16 GAERC, Emboffs met June 11 with European Correspondent Magnus Scholdtz just prior to his meeting with Swedish Foreign Minister Bildt to review the GAERC. We also spoke earlier with Deputy Correspondent Jonas Wendel and other officials. They told us that:

--Sweden supports growing EU sentiment to sign an Association Agreement with Syria before the end of the year;
--On the Bosnia, the EU is drafting an options paper for a follow-on military mission to replace EUFOR/Althea. The near-certain lack of UNSC Chapter VII authorization for such appeared problematic;
--On the Middle East, the Swedes noted "dispute" within the EU on how rigidly the Quartet principles should be enforced.
End Summary.

¶2. Scholdtz stated that the EU is more and more ready to sign its Association Agreement (AA) with Syria given relatively smooth Lebanese elections, especially if those involved in the creation of the new government "behave constructively." Scholdtz indicated that the process is "so far so good," but it takes time to form a new government. Translation of 700 pages of Arabic language text related to the AA is not expected to be completed before the July GAERC, and therefore no signing is likely to take place until the autumn. Scholdtz stressed the importance of the human rights and non-proliferation clauses of the AA "to press Syria" and stated that the EU will listen closely to the IAEA on the latter.

¶3. (C) The Western Balkans will be discussed over lunch, to which Serge Brammertz, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is invited. Deputy EU Correspondent Wendel stated that the GAERC will aim for conclusions conveying EU commitment to regional cooperation and visa liberalization for the countries in the region. Others in the MFA told us the conclusions will emphasize that Bosnia must meet the "5 plus 2" conditions. On visa liberalization, Wendel said that each country is at a different stage in the qualification process.

Sweden feels that if a country is ready for visa liberalization, it should be allowed such rather than treating the nations as a group. Scholdtz stated that an interim SAA agreement with Serbia might lead to greater stability in Bosnia.

¶4. (C) On the EUFOR/Althea military mission, Emboffs highlighted the essential nature of the UNSC Chapter VII authorization; any follow-on mission would lack such a mandate due to the Russian position. Scholdtz responded that the point was "well taken" (and he and his staff frantically took notes on this, the only time during the meeting). Scholdtz also mentioned the drafting of an options paper to establish a credible military guarantee "between no teeth and teeth, rather something in between."

¶5. (C) Regarding the Middle East peace process, Sweden does not want to create a "double standard" in policies towards Israel and the Palestinians, and the Swedes are discussing how to treat the new Israeli government that will not publicly endorse the two-state solution. FM Bildt is upset

that Israel has not yet opened its borders. Wendel noted that another sticking point within the EU is how rigidly the Quartet Principles should be enforced. The EU is still working on how to proceed with its Association Agreement with Israel. According to Wendel, the likely outcome is that the EU will prolong the action plan by a year. Israel is likely to protest, but in the end is expected to accept. He said that this would be a good exercise for the EU to unite and stand firm on a single foreign policy.

16. (C) The EU's annual evaluation of Cuba's human rights shows that no substantial progress has been made, but the EU will continue its dialogue with Cuban officials. The EU does not want to strengthen restrictive measures on Cuba when U.S. policy towards Cuba is "relaxing." A common position on Cuba will be include "certain restrictive measures." Sweden would like the Council to give benchmarks for the continuing dialogue. Spain is intensely focused on the issue and the Swedes expect a lively debate.

17. (C) If time permits, other possible agenda items will include Georgia, where Sweden supports the continuation of all international missions (EU, OSCE and UN). Iraq is a possible agenda topic, though the Swedes are not eager to make this an "A" item. Somalia and Sudan could also be discussion points. Operation Atalanta is up for review in June and so the EU will need to decide whether to broaden its mandate. On Sudan, Wendel stated that it would be preferable to make a statement that the international community should respect the ICC warrant for the arrest of President Al-Bashir rather than include it as an item for discussion at the GAERC. Finally, the U.K. is pushing Burma as a agenda item, though this is perceived as an act intended to influence British public opinion rather than a "strategic" move.

SILVERMAN